FBI Tried to Block '71 Anti-war Meeting at Catholic U.

By John M. Goshko
Washington Post Staff Writer

The FBI secretly tried to provoke dissension within the Catholic Church in an effort to force cancellation of a 1971 anti Vietnam War conference at Catholic University, according to confidential FBI documents made public yesterday.

In addition, the documents disclose, the FBI instigated a Feb. 19, 1972, raid by Houston police and alcohol beverage control agents on a private party being held by members of the Socialist Workers Party's Houston chapter.

The Houston raid, which was intended to distrupt SWP activities, took place almost a year after April 22, 1971—the date on which the FBI says it halted its covert counterintelligence program of harassing dissident domestic political ground.

This information is contained in documents obtained by the SWP under a federal court order and released to the press yesterday. The SWP is suing the FBI and other federal law enforcement agencies for $40 million, charging them with harassment and intimidation.

The FBI had investigated the SWP, a small Trotskyite group, for 38 years without producing any evidence of wrongdoing by the party or its members. Last September, former Attorney General Edward H. Levi ordered the bureau to halt the SWP probe.

The documents disclose that, in 1971, FBI headquarters enlisted several field offices in planning ways to stop the Student Mobilization Committee Against the War from holding a conference at Catholic University. In the documents, the committee is described as being dominated by the SWP.

The conference did take place as scheduled. But SWP officials said yesterday that Catholic University officials first tried to pressure the conference organizers to move the meeting elsewhere and, when that failed, insisted that they buy a million-dollar insurance policy against damage.

The documents do not say whether the FBI actually implemented any of these tactics, and a FBI spokesman said yesterday he didn't know the answer to that question. Clarence C. Walton, president of Catholic University, said last night through a spokesman that there was no interference in the matter from the church hierarchy and that he could recall no outside pressures to cancel the conference.

However, the FBI documents note that Patrick Cardinal O'Boyle, then Archbishop of the Washington Diocese, and Walton reportedly were "disturbed" by the renting of university facilities to the conference.

The FBI papers than discussed ways in which pressures could be brought to bear on Cardinal O'Boyle and Walton to cancel the conference. As outlined in the documents, these included "an anonymous telephone call campaign to the offices of O'Boyle and Walton" by FBI agents pretending to be irate Catholics, and anonymous letters calling on "conservative pro-Catholic organizations" to protest.

The documents also called for dis-

tribution of an FBI-fabricated leaflet entitled "Trotskyists Welcomed at Catholic University!" and for leaking the leaflet and other inflammatory material "on a confidential basis to coopertive news media."

Contained in the documents is an exchange between the FBI's New York and San Antonio field offices about the wisdom of putting these tactics into effect.

The New York office pointed out that "various forms of radical philosophy" had won sympathy among many Catholic priests and nuns. The radically inclined clergy, New York warned, might learn of the FBI's involvement at CU and embarrass the bureau by publicly exposing its tactics.

San Antonio replied that "with respect to New York's patronizing comments," the FBI "should be aware that there is a great number of Catholics, both religious and laymen, who do not subscribe to this radical philosophy."

If the FBI had taken "effective counterintelligence actions" when "so-called permissive attitudes" first became evident among youth and religious groups, "the bureau's investigation of New Left and other such matters would not have been as great as it is today," the San Antonio office said.

Documents relating to the Houston raid reveal that it resulted from information supplied to the police and alcohol agents through cover FBI surveillance of the SWP.

An FBI memo notes that the Houston SWP chapter had to post bail for several of the persons arrested in the raid. As a result, it adds, "the funds of the SWP have been completely depleted and the party is extremely upset because of their stupidity."

Despite FBI assertions that the late director, J. Edgar Hoover, ordered all domestic counterintelligence programs stopped in April, 1971, the documents show that the aim of the 1972 Houston incident was to harass and disrupt SWP activities.

On Feb. 5, 1974, an FBI agent, Hugh Mallet, gave the SWP a sworn affidavit on behalf of the bureau denying that any counterintelligence or disruption programs were carried out against the SWP after April 22, 1971.